

# AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF SERBIAN LITERATURE (THE HISTORY OF LITERATURE IN THE FUNCTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERARY CRITICISM)<sup>1</sup>

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For the needs of foreign readers and interpreters of Serbian literature as a work of South Slavic literature, and keeping in mind the requirements of modern literary history and literary criticism, we present the core of ten histories of Serbian literature created during the last sixteen decades. This work is based on the monograph *Преглед историја српске књижевности* (*The Overview of the Histories of Serbian Literature*). The aspects of interpretation are vividly illustrated by the following titles: „Критика као култура (Над првом *Историјом српске књижевности* Павела Јозефа Шафарика)” (“Criticism as Culture (On the First *History of Serbian Literature* by Pavel Josef Šafárik)”), „Брана на великом руском мору (*Преглед историје српске књижевности* А. Н. Пипина)” (“A Barrier in the Great Russian Sea (*Overview of the History of Serbian Literature* by A. N. Pipin)”), „Јанусова лица великог слависте (*Хисторија књижевности народа хрватскога и србскога Ватрослава Јагића*)” (“The Janus Faces of the Great Slavist (*History of the Literature of the Croatian and Serbian People* by Vatroslav Jagić)”), „Прва српска историја књижевности као критика (Књижевнотеоријска мисао Стојана Новаковића)” (“The First Serbian Literary History as Criticism (The Literary-Theoretical Thought of Stojan Novaković)”), „Систематизација и синтеза знања (Јован Грчић или историја књижевности као синтеза народног живота)” (“Systematization and Synthesis of Knowledge (Jovan Grčić or Literary History as a Synthesis of National Life)”), „Мапа граница српске књижевности (Ревалоризација *Прегледа* Павла Поповића)” (“Mapping the Boundaries of Serbian Literature (Reevaluation of Pavle Popović’s Overview)”), „На трагу стварног и могућег – смрт ћирилице (*Историја српске и хрватске књижевности Андре Гавриловића*)” (“On the Trail of the Real and the Possible – The Death of Cyrillic (*History of Serbian and Croatian Literature* by Andra Gavrilović)”), „Културноисторијски и естетички критеријуми критике (*Историја књижевности као национални пројекат Јована Скерлића*)” (“Cultural-Historical and Aesthetic Criteria of Criticism (Literary History as a National Project by Jovan Skerlić)”), „Историја књижевности као народна и властита историја

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(Нови пресек и садржај појма критике Тихомира Остојића)” (“Literary History as National and Personal History (A New Cross-Section and Content of the Concept of Criticism by Tihomir Ostojčić”), „Критика као свест о почетку, традицији и имену (*Историја српске књижевности* Јована Деретића)” (“Criticism as an Awareness of Origin, Tradition, and Identity (*History of Serbian Literature* by Jovan Deretić)”) and „Реафирмација метода и духа књижевне критике (Пратеће књиге *Историје* Јована Деретића)” (“Reaffirmation of the Method and Spirit of Literary Criticism (The Accompanying Books of *History* by Jovan Deretić”).

The humble beginnings of the history of literature among the Serbs, as an independent scientific discipline, appeared in the first decades of the 19th century, during the time of Dositej Obradović and Vuk Karadžić. The following books and works, all representing facts of the highest order, attest to this: Dositej Obradović’s *Етика* (*Ethics*), 1803, which offers a brief overview of the development of modern Serbian literature; Pavle Solarić’s *Pomenik knjižeski* (*Literary Chronicle*), 1810, which affirms the awareness of the identity of Serbian and Croatian literature; Lazar Bojić’s *Pamjatnik mužem u slavenoserbskom knjižestvu slavnom* (*Pantheon of Renowned Figures of the Slavic-Serb Literature*) 1815, which introduced the outlines of the first literary biography and bibliography, and which some literary theorists claim is actually the first literary history among the Serbs; and Georgije Magarašević’s *Писма Филосерба о сербској литератури* (*Letters of Philoserb about Serbian Literature*), 1829. They were followed by Dositej Obradović’s followers and predecessors of Jovan Skerlić: Jovan Subotić with the essay *Неке черте из повеснице сербског књижества* (*Some Features from the History of Serbian Literature*), 1846, and Jovan Ristić with the work *Новија књижевност Срба* (*Modern Literature of the Serbs*), 1852.

The first *Историја српске књижевности* (*History of Serbian Literature*) in 1865, was written for the Serbs by a foreign Slavist, Pavel Jozef Šafárik. The second history, *Преглед историје српске књижевности* (*Overview of the History of Serbian Literature*), in 1865, was also written by a foreigner, Aleksandr Nikolayevich Pipin. Thus, a tradition emerged of publishing Serbian literary histories in Russian, German, Czech, and French, some of which, either in full or in parts, have still not been translated into Serbian – a fact that is culturally difficult for us to understand and even harder to accept.

From the pen of historian and critic Stojan Novaković, a student of Đura Daničić, came the first *Историја српске књижевности* (*History of Serbian Literature*) (1867) by a domestic author, which reached its final form in the second edition in 1871. In the same year, 1867, just a few months before Novaković’s work, *Хисторија књижевности народа хрватског и српског* (*The History of the Literature of the Croatian and Serbian People*) by the distinguished philologist Vatroslav Jagić, a student of Franjo Rački and Franz Miklosich, was published. The series of literary histories in the 20<sup>th</sup> century continued with: *Историја српске књижевности*

(*History of Serbian Literature*) (1903, expanded edition 1906) by Jovan Grčić (1855–1941); *Преглед српске књижевности* (*Overview of Serbian Literature*) (1909) by Pavle Popović (1868–1939); *Историја српске и хрватске књижевности* (*History of Serbian and Croatian Literature*) by Andra Gavrilović (1910–1913, first edition, 1927, second edition); *Историја нове српске књижевности* (*History of Modern Serbian Literature*) (1914) by Jovan Skerlić (1877–1914); *Историја српске књижевности* (*History of Serbian Literature*) (1923) by Tihomir Ostojić (1865–1921); and *Историја српске књижевности* (*History of Serbian Literature*) (1983, first edition, and 2002, second expanded edition) by Jovan Deretić (1934–2002).

After the emergence of comprehensive literary histories, the development of literary science led to the need for partial histories of literature. Some of these, like *Дубровачка књижевност* (*Literature of Dubrovnik*) by Ivan Stojanović Dum (1900), even preceded the comprehensive histories of Serbian literature.

The corpus of partial histories of Serbian literature, considered as significant projects that affirm literature and literary criticism as part of culture, includes the following books: *Српска књижевност у средњем веку* (*Serbian Literature in the Middle Ages*) (1975) by Milan Kašanin (1895–1981); *Стара српска књижевност* (*Old Serbian Literature*) (1994) by Đorđe Trifunović (1934); *Народна књижевност* (*Folk Literature*) (1967) by Vido Latković (1901–1965); *Историја старе српске књижевности* (*History of Old Serbian Literature*) (1980) by Dimitrije Bogdanović (1930–1986); *Историја српске књижевности барокног доба* (*History of Serbian Literature of the Baroque Period*) (1970), *Историја српске књижевности класицизма и предромантизма. Класицизам* (*History of Serbian Literature of Classicism and Pre-Romanticism: Classicism*) (1979), and *Рађање нове српске књижевности: историја српске књижевности барока, класицизма и предромантизма* (*The Birth of New Serbian Literature: History of Serbian Literature of the Baroque, Classicism, and Pre-Romanticism*) (1983) by Milorad Pavić (1929–2009); *Историја српске књижевности. Романтизам I–III* (*History of Serbian Literature: Romanticism I–III*) (1972) by Miodrag Popović (1920–2005); *Историја модерне српске књижевности* (*History of Modern Serbian Literature*) (1986) by Predrag Palavestra (1930–2014); and *Историја српске књижевности: реализам I, II* (*History of Serbian Literature: Realism I, II*) (2017) by Milorad Jevrić (1950).

In interpreting these histories, we started from the fact that the list of the first critical works, the overview of comprehensive histories, and the list of partial histories of Serbian literature demonstrate how the foundation and the initial principle of literary history were established. The first principle of the history of Serbian literature shows that it evolves and begins from history itself. This has practically been the case from its inception: from the first historians of Serbian literature, Pavel Šafárik, Aleksandr Pipin, and Stojan Novaković, to the most recent and comprehensive literary history – *Историје српске књижевности* (*The History of Serbian Literature*) by Jovan

Deretić. Viewed as such, this corpus of ten literary histories actually contributes to the theory of literary history and the theory of literary criticism.

Keeping in mind the crucial fact that *the function of literary criticism in Serbian culture was initially fulfilled by the history of literature* as the fundamental, oldest, and primary branch of literary science, our *Overview of the Histories of Serbian Literature* demonstrates that these histories, valued at the time of their creation, throughout their existence, and even today, represent the pinnacle or *final products of the synthesis of critical thought*. Therefore, it can be justifiably argued that both the significant national cultural project and the great synthesis of the history of criticism – *Историје српске књижевне критике* (*The History of Serbian Literary Criticism*) by Predrag Palavestra – originate from the histories of Serbian literature.

Regarding the theoretical, methodological, and critical principles, in presenting an overview of ten histories of Serbian literature, we started from:

- the theoretical practical premise that literary history is a “narrative” about the literary past of a nation (a),
- the idea that criticism is at the core of literary history (b), and
- the fact that knowledge about the histories of Serbian literature and awareness of their continuity are incomplete and need to be re-evaluated and reaffirmed (c).

In this way, the power and symbolism of the literary pen, or rather the creative spirit and critical act, are affirmed in approaching the subject matter and issues at hand.

This fundamental idea, as an axiom, serves as a guide leading from the history of literature, which for a long time performed the functions of criticism, to the genesis of literary criticism, as the youngest branch of the science of literature. It highlights how literary criticism has formulated and fulfilled its functions in conditions where the history of literature was, to some extent, also the history of a nation.

In the process of affirming literature, bearing in mind “the paths it chooses and the ideas it presents and defends”, Andrić emphasizes the common denominator of these two histories.

The history of society and the history of literature, when compared, show that the views and understandings carried and advocated by true literature are the views and understandings of the future; and that lands sincerely and beautifully sung about are always respected and well defended by the greatest number of people. Likewise, those phenomena that face the condemnation of true literature do not have long lives or enduring appeal; their depiction in literature shows that they are doomed, no matter how powerful or enduring they may seem.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> „Историја друштва и историја књижевности, упоређене, показују да су мишљења и схватања која су ношена и заступана од праве књижевности – мишљења и схватања будућности; и да су искрено и лепо опеване земље увек и поштоване и добро браћене

Andrić, therefore, was also on the trail of the most recent criticism, according to which the history of literature, by establishing narratives, also defines the collective identity of a nation.<sup>3</sup> The essence of this view leads to the conclusion that “the closeness between literature and the history of literature is not only formal or stylistic, but genealogical and ideological-value-based”.<sup>4</sup> Or, to put it differently: “The history of art is the history of the development of a general, collective taste. It is the story of what cultured people have commonly regarded as beautiful in various periods of the historical process. That story proves nothing, it merely shows.”<sup>5</sup>

The same can be said, with certain additions, for the history of literature and criticism as part of culture, since they also show a gradual progression in the realization of human beauty and its logical development. The history of literature (as the most essential part of a nation’s culture) is best understood, as literary criticism interprets it, in the light of the moral changes brought about by literature as an art form. Within these changes lies the true meaning of art.

Criticism first reveals what was believed in and what served as the catalyst for change. These were: God, freedom, and ideals. In Serbian history and the literary history, all three elements are reflected in the symbols of the cross, the sword, and the pen, embodied in the idea of the struggle (with a flaming sword) for the honourable cross and golden freedom. Deprived of these three elements, modern art finds itself lost and directionless.

A review of ten histories of Serbian literature reveals that their nature and essence, as a framework for the theory of literary history and literary criticism – whose core as a form of creation lies in the communication of the soul and the salvific gift that expresses them – are complexly understood in the interpretations of Van Tieghem (1871–1948), the author of the first comparative literary history. By distinguishing the study of folklore from comparative literature in the literary history, he highlights the power of the pen and categorically asserts, as does I.

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од највећег броја људи. Исто тако, оне појаве које наиђу на осуду праве књижевности немају дуга века ни привлачне снаге; њихова слика у књижевности показује да су осуђене, па ма како моћне биле и трајне изгледале“. Андрић, Иво. „Свеске“, *Сабрана дела*. Књ. 17. Свјетлост / Сарајево, Просвета / Београд, Младост / Загреб, Државна založba Словеније / Љубљана, Мисла / Скопље, Побједа / Титоград, 1981, р. 15–16.

<sup>3</sup> See: Николић, Ненад. *Идентитет српске књижевности: Прича о књижевноисторијској идеји*, СКЗ–Партедон, Београд, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> „блискост књижевности и историје књижевности не само формална или стилска, него је генеалогска и идеолошко-вредносна.“ Juvan, Marko. *Nauka o književnosti u rekonstrukciji*, prev. Miljenka Vitezović, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2011, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> „Историја уметности, то је историја развијања само општег, колективног укуса. То је прича о томе шта су културни људи заједнички сматрали лепим у разним периодима историјског процеса. Та прича ништа не доказује, него само показује“. Дучић, Јован. *Благо цара Радована*, Беокњига, Београд, 2003, р. 226.

Andrić: “The history of literature is the history of human thought observed through the art of writing”.<sup>6</sup>

Particularly Van Tieghem’s view that “the history of literature is inseparable from the history of ideas”<sup>7</sup> is significant, and that it is difficult to draw a clear boundary between them. He cites religious ideas, philosophical ideas, moral ideas, aesthetic and literary ideas, all of which form the core of Serbian literature and the literary history, as well as the critical spirit that has developed within them.

The paper also presents the judgments of three recent monographs, aiming to demonstrate how a foundation for a new history of Serbian literature is being created today, and how the approach to literary criticism itself is evolving. These monographs are: *Систем српске књижевности* (*The System of Serbian Literature*) (1996) by Petar Milosavljević (1937), the initiator of the movement for the revival of Serbian studies; *Идентитет српске књижевности: прича о књижевноисторијској идеји* (*The Identity of Serbian Literature: A Story of Literary-Historical Ideas*) (2019) by Nenad Nikolić (1975), who explores the question of national literary identity through an analysis of the history of literary criticism and Serbian literary history; and *Путевени српске науке о књижевности* (*The Paths of Serbian Literary Studies*) (2020) by Jovan Pejčić (1951), who re-examines the developmental trajectory of Serbian literary studies using classical methodology, with a special focus on the histories of literature.

Milosavljević’s *Систем српске књижевности* (*The System of Serbian Literature*) is a central work in the reactivation and revitalization of Serbian studies. The *System* essentially provides an elaborate plan outlining what should be published and reevaluated in order to defend and preserve the corpus of Serbian literature.<sup>8</sup> In

<sup>6</sup> „Историја књижевности је историја људске мисли посматрана кроз уметност писања”. Van Tieghem, *Упоредна књижевност*, prev. Mihailo B. Milošević i Nada Milošević, Naučna knjiga, Beograd, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> „историја књижевности нераздвојива од историја идеја”. *Ibidem*, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup> Besides *Система српске књижевности* (*The System of Serbian Literature*) (1996, 2001), Milosavljević has published several books dedicated to the revival and return to the Serbian philological tradition, which was interrupted during the period of Serbo-Croatian studies: *Срби и њихов језик* (*Serbs and Their Language*) (1997, 2001), *Српски филолошки програм* (*The Serbian Philological Program*) (2000), *Увод у србистику* (*Introduction to Serbian Studies*) (2002, 2003), *Српска писма* (*Serbian Scripts*) (2006, 2009), *Идеје југословенства и српска мисао* (*Ideas of Yugoslavism and Serbian Thought*) (2007), *Српско питање и србистика* (*The Serbian Question and Serbian Studies*) (2007). On the occasion of the Novi Sad meeting in 2007, organized by the Movement for the Revival of Serbian Studies, which annulled the Novi Sad Agreement of 1954, Bojan Radić published the book *Српско питање и србистика – Разговори са Петром Милосављевићем* (*The Serbian Question and Serbian Studies – Conversations with Petar Milosavljević*) (2008). At the core of all these books, according to Milosavljević, lies the idea that the main issues of the corpus of Serbian literature, its tradition, and the relationship between the whole and

the “Preface”, where he defines the system of Serbian literature and demonstrates how its corpus has been eroded and continuously challenged, Milosavljević proposed a project to publish an edition of *The History of Serbian Literature* along with accompanying works and materials in ten volumes. These volumes include histories of Serbian literature written before World War II, nine of which were reviewed, with Milosavljević writing a preface for each. He approached each history individually, and the entire system of Serbian literature as a whole, under the motto of Northrop Frye from *Anatomy of Criticism*: “Literature is not a subject of study, but an object of study”.<sup>9</sup> In practical terms, Milosavljević – a distinguished professor, Serbian studies scholar, critic, and cultural figure with authoritative standing – based his approach on the principle of criticism: “It is an illusion to think that one can study Serbian literature without knowing the foundational historical texts that, in earlier periods, critically influenced the shaping of literary-historical consciousness”.<sup>10</sup>

In both perspectives, that of literature as a goal and the understanding of its histories, Milosavljević’s attitude toward critical consciousness and the culture shaped by literary histories is evident. The edition opens many questions, and he posed them by theoretically and practically explaining the methodology for examining the histories of Serbian literatures and the system of Serbian literature. The following questions are essential:

- a) the models according to which overviews of Serbian literature were written, b) the points of view from which their authors observed Serbian and other Yugoslav literatures, c) the correspondence among the facts these overviews present to the researcher, d) the strategies that led to changes in models and points of view, e) major methodological shortcomings in the historiography dealing with the study of Serbian literature.<sup>11</sup>

When it comes to the models by which overviews or histories of Serbian literature were written, Milosavljević shows how the historical process unfolded, starting with the early findings of literary historians: Kopitar and Vuk Karadžić. Karadžić spoke of Serbs of three laws: Greek, Roman, and Turkish, or Serbs who were Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim. Then there were Šafárik and Pipin, who, following the

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its parts should be resolved in the new geopolitical context.

<sup>9</sup> Frye, Northrop, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton University Press, 2015, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Милосављевић, Петар, *Систем српске књижевности*. Народна и универзитетска библиотека, Приштина, 1996, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> „а) модели по којима су писани прегледи о српској литератури, б) тачке гледишта са којих су њихови аутори сагледавали српску и друге југословенске литературе, в) кореспонденција међу чињеницама који ови прегледи предочавају истраживачу, г) стратегије које су доводиле до променама у моделима и тачкама гледишта, д) крупнији методолошки пропусти историографије која се бави испитивањем српске књижевности“. Idem.

formula “one language, one people, one literature”, saw three languages, three nations (Serbian, Slovenian, and Bulgarian), and three literatures, extending to the present day. They referred to Serbian literature as the literature of “Slavo-Serbs of the Eastern Rite and the literature of Catholic Slavo-Serbs (Dalmatians, Bosnians, Slavonians) and Croats”.<sup>12</sup> This view was also followed by Novaković, one of the most diligent, versatile, and influential Serbs, who wrote the history of the literature of Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Serbs, and Croats. Later, this principle of “one language, one literature” was upheld by J. Grčić, T. Ostojić, and A. Gavrilović.

However, Croatian literary historians V. Jagić and Đ. Šurmin established a different model. Although Jagić, in *Историји књижевности народа хрватскога и српскога* (*The History of the Literature of the Croatian and Serbian Peoples*), speaks of two closely related nations, one language, and one literature (which he divided into three periods: old, middle, and new literature), Milosavljević summarizes that, in Jagić’s model, the “literature of Catholic Serbs”<sup>13</sup> disappeared. It is telling that, at the same time as publishing this *History*, Jagić founded the edition *Стару писци хрватски* (*Old Croatian Writers*), in which “writers from Dubrovnik were predominantly represented”.<sup>14</sup>

In *Повјести књижевности хрватске и српске* (*The History of Croatian and Serbian Literature*) (1898), Šurmin elaborates Jagić’s model of Serbian and Croatian literature as two literatures written in one language (which began to diverge in the 11<sup>th</sup> century), asserting that they share only the domain of folk literature. Following Jagić’s model, in which “Catholic Serbs are merely another name for Croats”<sup>15</sup>, and his edition, Šurmin concludes that Croatian literature consists of old, middle, and new literature, while Serbian literature consists only of old and new literature. The Dubrovnik, or middle period, which developed as distinct and regional, disappeared from the system of Serbian literature – in other words, it was appropriated.<sup>16</sup>

Two years after Šurmin’s model and book, there was a swift reaction from dum Ivan Stojanović, a Catholic Serb from Dubrovnik. In his posthumously published works *Дубровачка књижевност* (*Literature of Dubrovnik*) (1900) and *Новија повјест Дубровника* (*The Recent History of Dubrovnik*) (1903), he argued for the “Serbian ethnic origin of the majority of Dubrovnik’s population, both the nobility and the common people”.<sup>17</sup> Stojanović emphasized the fact that Dubrovnik literature

<sup>12</sup> „Славосрба источног обреда и књижевности католичких Славосрба (Далматинаца, Босанаца, Славонаца) и Хрвата“, *Ibidem*, p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> „књижевност Срба католика“, *Ibidem*, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> „највише представљени писци из Дубровника“, *Ibidem*, p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> „Срби католици само друго име за Хрвате“, *Ibidem*, p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> According to Milosavljević, all subsequent histories of Croatian literature: Vodnik’s (1913), Ježić’s (1944), Kombol’s (1945), Frangeš’s (1985) were written in the spirit of Šurmin’s, *Ibidem*, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> „српско етничко порекло већине Дубровчана, и властеле и пука“. *Ibidem*, p. 40.

was written in Latin, Italian, and Serbian, meaning it also belongs to the corpus of Serbian literature. His findings, model, and perspective align with the views of Vuk Karadžić, Kopitar, Šafárik, and Novaković.

Grčić and Ostojić followed Stojanović's work, challenging Šurmin's model, which essentially implies a discontinuity in the history of Serbian literature. The same can be said for Gavrilović and the most prominent Serbian literary historians, Popović and Škerlić. All of them argued for the continuity of Serbian literature, which consists of folk literature, old, middle (or Dubrovnik), and modern literature, as it was recognized up until World War II.

In the new state, Antun Barac (1894–1955) wrote the book *Југословенска књижевност (Yugoslav Literature)* (1954), which includes Croatian, Slovenian, and Serbian literature. In it, folk literature is considered shared, while Dubrovnik literature, as Šurmin advocated and Jagić initiated, is presented as Croatian literature. Milosavljević argues that the view – that Dubrovnik literature was once Serbian, later shared with the Croats, and now exclusively Croatian – would be accepted by all Serbian institutions as they carried out national projects in literature and culture. This perspective was even confirmed in *Историју српског народа (The History of the Serbian People)*. In this way, the Serbs abandoned the classical philological method and their own standpoint of interest.

Milosavljević interprets the removal of Dubrovnik from the corpus of Serbian literature by addressing a second question: the perspective from which Serbian, Croatian, and Yugoslav literatures are viewed. He begins with Seymour Chatman's perspective in the book *Story and Discourse* (1978), which asserts that three points of view are crucial in narrative texts: "conceptual, interest-based, and observational".<sup>18</sup> He also refers to Warren and Wellek's *Theory of Literature*, in which the authors problematize the observational point of view, arguing that in practice it is difficult to "commit to a historical or contemporary stance" and propose "perspectivism" as a position that will respect the values of the era in which the work was created, as well as the values of all subsequent periods, including the contemporary age.<sup>19</sup> His finding is:

The abandonment of the philological conceptual point of view has produced different consequences in the creation of an image of Croatian literature. The equation of Catholicism with Croatism in the Serbian language sphere has expanded the area of the Croatian nation and Croatian literature to the detriment of the Serbian nation and literature. In this, the Illyrian Movement played a pivotal role.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> „концептуалне, интересне и посматрачке“, *Ibidem*, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 44.

<sup>20</sup> „Напуштање филолошке концептуалне тачке гледишта произвело је другачије последице у стварању слике о хрватској литератури. Изједначавање католицизма са хрватством на простору српског језика проширило је подручје хрватске нације и

Milosavljević sees the scientific solution to these problems in the application of the method of “dialectics of concrete totality”<sup>21</sup> and the application of a model of inclusion and exclusion of facts, upon which he relies by referring to Richardson. He emphasizes that the current stance (for political rather than scientific reasons) deprives the history of Serbian literature of the writers and works of Catholic Serbs, interpreting the Illyrian Movement solely as a movement of Croats, rather than as a movement of Serbs and others in Croatia. The essence is that the Serbian strategy of literature (which comprises works in the Serbian language in the Štokavski dialect by Serbs of all three faiths: Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim), which has evolved from Vuk Karadžić and Dositej Obradović through all significant Serbian historians: Novaković, Gavrilović, Ostojić, and P. Popović, thanks to the Croatian strategy – both of which are legitimate – and the acceptance of Serbian science after World War II, has been defeated and rejected. Milosavljević concludes: “This situation is unpleasant for Serbian science and culture. However, Croatian science and culture cannot take pride in it either, as it is not difficult to see the political background of such behaviour and to illuminate the mechanisms that have led to it”.<sup>22</sup>

Milosavljević concludes that it is the duty of Serbian science to publish the edition of *Историје српске књижевности* (*The History of Serbian Literature*) to dispel all prejudices, achieve the reintegration of the corpus of national literature, and uncover “forgotten and suppressed texts and facts”, as this fundamentally concerns (1) the “corpus of Serbian literature” and (2) the “relation to the Serbian philological tradition”.<sup>23</sup>

Following the set goals, Milosavljević reviewed all histories of Serbian literature and histories of the nation, as well as significant accompanying literature in the fields of literary criticism, theory, and aesthetics, particularly the history and literary criticism that conditioned them; thus, he created a Serbian outline for the Serbian theory of literary history and literary criticism.

In this context, supporting his project, which was previously proposed by Vasa Milinčević as urgent and essential, our *Overview of the Histories of Serbian Literature* can be considered a modest contribution to Milosavljević’s project, emphasizing the genesis of criticism as a culture within the histories of Serbian literature.<sup>24</sup> We are

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хрватске књижевности на штету српске нације и књижевности. У томе је прекретничку улогу одиграо илирски покрет“. *Ibidem*, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> „дијалектике конкретног тоталитета“, *Ibidem*, p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> „Та ситуација је непријатна за српску науку и културу. Али се њоме не може подичити ни хрватска наука и култура, јер није тешко видети политичку позадину таквог понашања и осветлити механизме који су таквом понашању водили“, *Ibidem*, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56.

<sup>24</sup> In addition to the edition of *Историја српске књижевности* (*The History of Serbian Literature*) in ten volumes, as a cultural act that complements this project, Milosavljević

convinced that there is no more important project in Serbian literary science than the re-evaluation of everything that has been written in all histories of Serbian literature. Because, regarding the discussion about rhetoricians, P. K. Tacitus claimed that “different periods bring changes in both forms and types of speech”<sup>25</sup>; we would add: they also bring changes in evaluations.

Searching for the identity of Serbian literature, literary historian and literary critic Nenad Nikolić, in his capital monograph *Идентитет српске књижевности* (*The Identity of Serbian Literature*), accepts the point of view that the history of literature must have a practical role and “social importance”.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, he starts from the theoretical question: what is Serbian literature?

Nikolić comprehensively analyzes the history of literature and literary criticism, as well as all histories of Serbian literature, in a manner appropriate to the modern achievements of literary science, identifying the values of literature as literary and cultural heritage. By focusing on the given themes and issues, he necessarily illuminates questions that are the subject of our *Overview*.

He approaches the topic under the subtitle of the monograph “A Story about the Literary-Historical Idea” viewing the meaning of literary history as an attempt to narrate the story of literature through its histories or to “*narratively shape the representation of Serbian literature as a meaningful subject that endures over time*” (italics N. N.).<sup>27</sup> According to him, literary history as a story confirms the “*permanence of sameness and the variability of selfhood*” (italics N. N.)<sup>28</sup>, which pertains to the national identity of literature..

Just as we searched for evidence that literary criticism is established as part of culture and heritage in the histories of Serbian literature, Nikolić sought the foundations and core of the identity of Serbian national literature. He demonstrated that the histories of literature are, in fact, the histories of the people and culture, and that within them, along with the accompanying criticism, as highlighted by P. Milosavljević’s project

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has proposed for publishing the edition *Антологија српске поезије* (*Anthology of Serbian Poetry*) in eight volumes, keeping in mind the fact that poetry is the most significant part of Serbian literature and culture, thus laying a new foundation for illuminating the history of Serbian literature. The edition would, by spatially and spiritually expanding Serbian literature, encompass: ancient poetry, folk lyrical poetry, folk epic poetry, Romanticism, modernism, and postmodernism.

<sup>25</sup> „различита раздобља уносе промене и у облике и у врсте говора“. Tacit, Publije Kornelije. „Razgovori o govornicima“, *Germanija*. prev. Darinka Nevenić Grabovac, Rad, Beograd, 1969, p. 77.

<sup>26</sup> „друштвену важност“, Николић, Ненад. *Идентитет српске књижевности: прича о књижевноисторијској идеји*. СКЗ, Београд, 2019, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> „приповедно уобличи представа о српској књижевности као осмишљеном предмету који траје у времену“. *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> „трајност истости и променљивост сопства“. *Ibidem*, p. 18.

of publishing the edition *Историје српске књижевности* (*Histories of Serbian Literature*), all essential cores that create the cultural consciousness of the identity of the people can be found.

Thus, for example, Georgije Magarašević, Jovan Subotić and Jovan Ristić, with their small studies, laid the foundations for “the concept of Serbian literature as a national literature, based on the romantic understanding of both the nation and literature”<sup>29</sup>, claims Nikolić while illuminating Novaković’s *History*. Subotić’s studies „Неке черте из повестнице сербског књижевства” (“Some Features of the History of Serbian Literature”) and J. Ristić’s *Die neuere Literatur der Serben* established “the literary-historical framework of the new Serbian literature, based on what they considered its general and unchanging characteristic, which thus became the evaluative criterion for assessing literary works that were yet to emerge”.<sup>30</sup>

A similar evaluative judgment applies to G. Magarašević’s article „Писма Филосерба о сербској литератури” (“Letters of the Philosopher about Serbian Literature”), which began with an examination of the nature of literature, viewing history as “an objective depiction of literary development”<sup>31</sup>. Thus, we are talking about critical contributions that we have already noted, keeping in mind that they practically served as a prologue to all histories of Serbian literature.

Nenad Nikolić, like J. Pejičić and all relevant Serbian literary historians, literary critics, and cultural scholars, emphasizes as a self-evident position that “Jovan Deretić [...] wrote the first complete and comprehensive *History of Serbian Literature*”<sup>32</sup> in which he abolished the division into old, folk, and modern literature. He reopened the question of periodization as a central issue in the history of Serbian literature and approached the re-evaluation appropriate to the new geopolitical circumstances.

In addition to Deretić, Nikolić considers S. Novaković, J. Skerlić, and P. Popović to be great synthesists and historians, who “highly distinguish themselves by the visionary ability with which they created an image of Serbian literature in their histories, which, thanks to its completeness, could become a cultural fact.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> „представа о српској књижевности као националној књижевности, на темељима романтичарског схватања и нације и књижевности“, *Ibidem*, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> „књижевноисторијски облик нове српске књижевности, заснован на ономе што су сматрале њеном општом и непроменљивом особином која је, с тога, постала вредносни критеријум за оцену књижевних дела која је тек требало да настану“, *Ibidem*, p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> „објективан приказ књижевног развоја“, *Ibidem*, p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> „Јован Деретић [...] написао прву целовиту и свеобухватну *Историју српске књижевности*“, *Ibidem*, p. 28.

<sup>33</sup> „високо издваја способност визије којом су у својим историјама књижевности створили представу о српској књижевности која је захваљујући и својој потпуности могла постати културна чињеница“, *Ibidem*, p. 31.

Nikolić situates Jovan Skerlić and his *History*, in which “the aesthetic is subordinated to the idea”<sup>34</sup>, among the histories of Serbian literature and within the context of Serbian literary criticism as a cultural heritage. He pointed out, as he titled his comparative study, the “comparability of two traditions” – the Dositej Obradović’s tradition and the Vuk Karadžić’s tradition:

Even today, Serbian spirits are divided into two great factions: those for whom the progenitor and spiritual father is Dositej Obradović, with his realistic, rationalist, and Western ideas, and those for whom the progenitor is Vuk Karadžić, with his romantic and narrowly nationalist ideas.<sup>35</sup>

By addressing the identity of Serbian literature, the author opened all the essential questions of national history, literature, and culture. He named them with titles and subtitles of chapters dedicated to individual literary historians and their histories. More precisely, he identified the key histories of ideas that must be treated synthetically in some new history of Serbian literature and, once re-evaluated, become a critical heritage of culture.

If he saw the foundation of Serbian national literature in the first critical and historical works, in the histories of literature, moving from one to the other and searching through historical cross-sections for a specific weight of meaning, Nikolić has valuably marked their essences and named the ideas as findings and judgments:

– Stojan Novaković writes the history of national literature as a *folk* literature and *derives its unity from the unity of the people*, narrating history as an art of storytelling.

– Jovan Skerlić starts from the *comparability of two traditions* in Serbian literature and history, vitalism and rationalism, and, as a fighter against philological criticism, objectifies his history as a literary-historical narrative.

– Pavle Popović writes an *Overview*, establishing Yugoslav literature by starting from *panserbianism and arriving at self-denial*.

– Jovan Deretić, by *reinforcing the principle of Serbian identity and seeking the national identity of literature*, has established the definitive boundaries of Serbian literature between poetics and history and placed literature within the model of an open narrative.

All these ideas are visible in the entirety of Nikolić’s analysis. We illustrate them with the example of a summary judgment on J. Skerlić – a judgment that shows what was and how everything transpired and changed in the histories of Serbian literature, literary criticism, and culture:

<sup>34</sup> „естетско подређено идејном“, *Ibidem*, p. 183.

<sup>35</sup> „И данас српски духови деле се на два велика дела: на оне којима је родоначелник и духовни отац Доситеј Обрадовић, са његовим реалистичким, рационалистичким и западњачким идејама, и на оне којима је родоначелник Вук Караџић, са својим романтичарским и уско националистичким идејама.“ Quoted by: *Ibidem*, p. 126.

The Dositej's tradition, which Skerlić held most dear, had a limited scope in forming the literary-historical narrative when it came to applying the praised idea of Serbs of all three confessions. *Yugoslavism*, which demanded that what the Croats defined as their heritage not be touched, limited Skerlić's understanding of Serbian literature to the *creation of Orthodox Serbs*, thereby betraying both Dositej's enlightened and Vuk's romantic linguistic nationalism. This introduced *tension* (italics N. N.) into Serbian literary historiography in the first decades of the twentieth century, as Pavle Popović then viewed Serbian literature indeed in a broadly Dositej-like manner. However, with Popović's conceptualization of Yugoslav literature toward the end of World War I, limiting Serbian literature to the creation of Orthodox Serbs would become normalized, and after World War II, it would become binding.<sup>36</sup>

And thus, we have a framed picture of history and reality. Once, V. Jagić and A. Gavrilović, and not only them, wrote the history and historiography of Serbian or Croatian literature, discussing the common idea or the *sameness* of Serbs and Croats and their literatures. Then, P. Popović, Miloš Savković, and Antun Barac wrote the histories of Yugoslav literature. These could have been the consequence and result of many historical, linguistic, and other processes and circumstances, as indicated by one among many facts. The notable Croatian writer and politician from the 17th century, Juraj Križanić, a nobleman advocating for the unity of Slavs, noted that he heard songs about Prince Marko in his native Karlovac, considering the religious division among Serbs and Croats as "the main obstacle from the church and the emperor. Therefore, it is no wonder that this sincere panslavist loved the songs about the greatest hero of the South Slavs".<sup>37</sup> After the collapse of the two Yugoslavias, the idea of the sameness of the three-named people and the idea of their brotherhood and unity was rejected and extinguished.

<sup>36</sup> „Доситејевска традиција до које је Скерлић највише држао била је ограниченог домета у формирању књижевноисторијске приче када је реч о примени хваљене идеје о Србима све три вероисповести. Југословенство које захтева да се не дира у оно што су Хрвати одредили као своју баштину, ограничило је Скерлићево схватање српске књижевности на *стварање православних Срба*, чиме су изневерени и Доситејеви просвећени и Вуков романтичарски језички национализам. То је унело *напетост* (курзив Н. Н.) и у српску књижевну историографију прве деценије и по двадесетог века, јер је Павле Поповић тада српску књижевност посматрао заиста доситејевски широко. Међутим, са Поповићевом концептуализацијом југословенске књижевности пред крај Првог светског рата ограничавањем српске књижевности на стварање православних Срба постаће нормализовано а после Дугог светског рата и обавезујуће”, *Ibidem*, p. 184.

<sup>37</sup> „главном препреком од стране цркве и цара. Зато није ни чудо што је овај искрени пансловен волео песме о највећем јунаку Јужних Словена“, Алексић, Марко, *Марко Краљевић (Човек који је постао легенда)*, Лагуна, Београд, 2015, p. 282–283.

Nikolić's synthesis in his monograph, which has two parallel streams: the first in the main text (pages 9–507) and the second in the 'Notes', which can be read as a companion book (pages 509–652), is proof that Serbian literary science has the strength to reach a re-evaluation of the essence of Serbian literary histories and thereby reaffirm critical awareness in the nation. It shows correction of the omissions from the edition of *Српска књижевна критика* (*Serbian Literary Criticism*), in which, according to Milosavljević, "the stance of Serbian philology has remained hidden [...]. It required both skill and finesse to remain silent about how the corpus of Serbian literature was viewed by Pavle Popović and other Serbian positivists".<sup>38</sup>

Starting from the cited idea of Tacitus as the key to one's work, the fruitful literary historian and critic Jovan Pejčić, in the process of critical re-evaluation in *Путевима српске науке о књижевности* (*The Paths of Serbian Literary Science*), began with the fundamental question – the principles of literary science and the issue of categorization, which, as we emphasized, is at the core of every history of Serbian literature. He distilled the problem to an essential measure and evaluation, based on three principles: *the principle of affirmation* (1), *the principle of actualization* (2), and *the principle of problematization* (3). Thus, this approach forms the basis of literary science, equally vital for literary history and literary criticism, and hence his conclusion: "each of the aforementioned principles represents a key, or opens a field for a separate literary discipline – for example, *criticism*, or *literary history* and *comparatistics*, or *literary theory*"<sup>39</sup> (italics J. P.).

In these principles, convinced that there are no perfect divisions in the history of literature nor can there be, Pejčić seeks the fundamental meaning of literary history and literary criticism, finding *the meaning of similarities and a common core, or the fundamental values, duration, and unity of literary and national identity*. This is reflected in the key signs from the titles of the chapters in the book, titled "Seals": the meaning and similarities of history and literary criticism, the unity of literary and national identity, the connection and relationship between the literary critic and the literary historian, and the foundations, values, and limits of the expansion of national literature and its endurance.

When it comes to the fundamental pathways of the development of the history of Serbian literature, corresponding to the three principles outlined in the approach, Pejčić's synthesis leads to the conclusion that the foundation of Serbian literary science consists of: the myth of the break and development of Serbian literature arising in multiple languages, the quest for the beginnings of Serbian literary criticism and essay

<sup>38</sup> „становиште српске филологије је остало скривено. [...] Требало је и вештине и умешности да се прећути како су на корпус српске књижевности гледали Павле Поповић и други српски позитивисти.” Милосављевић, П. *Ibidem*, p. 99.

<sup>39</sup> „свако од поменутих начела представља кључ, односно отвара поље засебне литерарне дисциплине – на пример *критике*, или *књижевне историје* и *компаратистике*, или *теорије књижевности*”. Пејчић, Јован, *Путеви српске науке о књижевности*, СКЗ / Београд, Лесковачки културни центар / Лесковац, 2020, p. 11.

writing, and the issue of periodization as a foundational idea of Serbian literary history and its emergence.<sup>40</sup> These are the main markers from the titles of Pejičić's *Paths of Serbian Literary Science*, encapsulated in the chapter *Foundations*.

The unity of literary and national identity, which can be found as the least common denominator of all histories of Serbian literature, Pejičić vividly demonstrated through an analysis of the format of the works and the creative personality of Jovan Skerlić as a literary critic and literary historian. Among other things, he emphasized what was our fundamental starting point, which indicates the connection and relationship between history and literary criticism, as well as the fact that literary criticism has its place of origin in the history of literature. Skerlić writes *History*, as he indicates in the introduction, "understanding literature as the highest expression of national life".<sup>41</sup>

Pejičić's *Paths* also have the elaboration of the partial *Историје српске књижевности барокног доба* (*History of Serbian Literature of the Baroque Period*) (1970) by Milorad Pavić, a literary historian characterized by synthesis and a comparative method in the partial history of literature, presented after the pages concluding the discussion on the scope and significance of the great Skerlić.<sup>42</sup> Pejičić believes that Pavić is defined by two research directions: "One of the directions concerned the study of the connections between Serbian writers and the literatures of European nations. The second direction led to the exploration and synthetic treatment of Serbian literature of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries".<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> It is well-known that the dominant literary figure at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Dositej Obradović, a writer who "introduced the national language into Serbian literature with great fanfare". By creating in two languages, he "finally confirmed the bridge" between the old and new Serbian literature, which was established before him by Venclović. Gavril Stefanović Venclović "was the first and last Serbian literary worker to write in two languages, Serbian-Slavonic and the national language, and with him, the medieval tradition of Serbian literature came to an end". See more in: Шпадијер, Ирена, „Стара српска књижевност и средњовековно рукописно наслеђе“, зборник радова Свет српске рукописне књиге (XII–XVII век), САНУ, Београд 2016, p. 150, 154.

<sup>41</sup> „схватајући књижевност као највиши израз народног живота“. Скерлић, Јован, *Историја нове српске књижевности*. Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, Београд, 1997, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> We rely on Pejičić's judgment due to his principle of actualization and longevity in the teaching and study of literature. He has edited and equipped several works of Serbian writers with critical commentary, including those of Jovan Skerlić (in five volumes), Nikanor Grujić, Isidora Sekulić, Bogdan Popović, Milan Rakić, Laza Kostić, Vladislav Petković Dis, Milutin Bojić, Justin Popović, Branimir Ćosić, Rade Drainac, Nikolaj Timčenko, as well as a critical anthology of representative works about Ljubomir Nešić. These are first-rate facts that indicate the nature of his research and assessments.

<sup>43</sup> „Један од праваца тицао се проучавања веза српских писаца са књижевностима европских народа. Други правац водио је ка истраживању и синтетичкој обради српске књижевности XVII, XVIII и раног XIX века“, Пејчић, Ј., *Ibidem*, p. 215.

Pejičić's final finding is that Pavić's synthesis is based on the representation of related events "in the spheres of the history of the people, the church, visual arts, education, and language"<sup>44</sup>, which arises from Pavić's *History*, and that all of this "returns to the field of the literary history"<sup>45</sup>. This indicates how important it is to understand the overview of the histories of ideas from all histories of Serbian literature.

As a guide on the paths of the development of Serbian literary science, Pejičić's elaboration of Šafarik's *History* is significant for our considerations. Considering the fact that it is based on the primary reality that it was written by a foreigner (and foreigners have always been supporters of Serbian culture, not only in the context of literary history but also in national history and all other cultural areas), and finding that the famous Slovak made a "decisive step" in the literary history among the Serbs, he consequently writes: "The heritage of Serbian literary historiography has a dual origin. The solutions derive from domestic and foreign historians and interpreters"<sup>46</sup>.

In this sense, Pejičić's *Paths* are, without a doubt, a unique way towards a new history of Serbian literature in which literary criticism conquers a new ground.

Critics, cultural scholars, and aestheticians today have a better understanding of the process of creating an artistic work, and although they are involved in political life like their predecessors, they should avoid any political compromise, nationalism, and romantic fervour.<sup>47</sup> They should understand and interpret the process as poets have always known and done. Poets have claimed that *today's sense of beauty is a product of other centuries*. The history of art has long worked on creating certain shared certainties in matters of beauty. It has established some standards that have already taken on the forms of principles, even dogmas. "Today, the peoples of the same culture have almost the same principles about overall life; and it is impossible for this not to affect art"<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> „у сферама историје народа, цркве, ликовне уметности, просвете и језика“, *Ibidem*, p. 241.

<sup>45</sup> „враћа на поље историје књижевности“, *Idem*.

<sup>46</sup> „Наслеђе српске књижевне историографије двоструког је порекла. Решења потичу од домаћих и иностраних историчара и тумача“. *Ibidem*, p. 247.

<sup>47</sup> It is essential for understanding our approach, and in the introduction we started from Frye's point of view that "Literature is not a subject of study, but an object of study", the idea that almost all Serbian writers, critics and thinkers were also politicians, so their mission was determined by parallel creative and political activity. See: Аврамовић, Зоран, *Чују је књижевник и његово дело: расправа о културном идентитету српске књижевности*, Издавачка књижарница Зорана Стојановића, Сремски Карловци – Нови Сад, 2003, p. 5. The part of the discussion under the title *Serbian Literature and Politics* (95–106) is indicative.

<sup>48</sup> „Данас народи исте културе имају скоро исте принципе о укупном животу; а није могуће да то не захвати и уметност“. The opinion of Jovan Dučić, a poet of the first rank, which was also reflected in criticism, should be taken as reliable. He writes: „Кад један песник пише о другом песнику, тај је случај интересантнији него кад о песнику пише

This viewpoint of the poet Jovan Dučić points to the essence confirmed by our *Overview of Ten Histories of Serbian Literature*. Two ideas emerge as conclusions: In the histories of Serbian literature, the common formula of beauty has grown out of Greek arts (1), and critics and literary historians should evaluate by striving for thoughts that encompass adopted standards (2). Like the poet, the literary historian and literary critic should see in a work what “is valuable at least for the majority of cultured people”<sup>49</sup>, recognizing that it is a problematic act when one interprets another person, and thus no one should cast stones at the “sanctified values” of the time and literary generation. The developmental arc of Serbian historians was increasingly aligned with these ideas.

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критичар. Јер је песник одиста једини који може да у неко дело проникне до у саму његову срж, а то значи до крајње танчине сваке појединости. Ово осећају и многи критичари. Песник је једини који може да оцени не само што је други урадио, него и све што је хтео и могао да уради“. (“When one poet writes about another poet, that case is more interesting than when a critic writes about a poet. For the poet is indeed the only one who can penetrate into a work to its very core, which means to the utmost nuance of every detail. Many critics feel this as well. The poet is the only one who can evaluate not only what the other has done but also everything that he wanted and could have done.”), Дучић, Јован, *Благо цара Радована*, Београд, 2003, p. 224, 225.

<sup>49</sup> „вреди бар за највећи део културних људи.“ *Ibidem*, p. 236.

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**Abstract:** The paper starts from the crucial fact that the function of literary criticism in Serbian culture was initially performed by the history of literature as the foundational, oldest, and main branch of literary science. An overview of the history of Serbian literature shows that it, valued at the time of its emergence, throughout its duration, and even today, represents the culmination or final products of critical thought synthesis. Therefore, it can be rightly asserted that both the significant national cultural project and the major synthesis of the history of Serbian criticism – *The History of Serbian Literary Criticism* by Predrag Palavestra – emanate from the history of Serbian literature. In its theoretical, methodological, and critical principles, the paper represents a cross-section of ten histories of Serbian literature.

**Keywords:** *History of Serbian literature, literary criticism as culture, Pavel Jozef Šafarik, A. N. Pipin, Vatroslav Jagić, Stojan Novaković, Andra Gavrilović, Pavle Popović, Jovan Skerlić, Tihomir Ostojić, Predrag Palavestra, Petar Milosavljevića, Jovan Pejčića, Nenad Nikolić.*